

NEGRO EMANCIPATION

AND

West Indian Independence

THE

TRUE INTEREST OF GREAT BRITAIN.

BY JOHN TAYLOR.

Third Edition.

Hinc rapti pretio fasces, sectorque favoris
 Ipe sui populus; fatalisque ambitus urbi,
 Annus venali referens certamina campo:
 Hinc usura vorax, avidumque in tempora foenus;
 Semina, quæ populos semper mersere potentes.

Lucan.

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PREFACE.

THE appeals hitherto made to the public in favour of Negro Emancipation, have been almost exclusively founded on moral and religious considerations; the rules of conduct recognized by honourable and virtuous minds. To descend from the elevation of such a line of argument, to the examination of pecuniary and political advantage, is of itself a painful humiliation: but since it has been found by lamentable experience, that men in public as well as private affairs give a more cordial assent to the injustice of any vicious practice, when they have well ascertained that practice to be unprofitable to themselves; the following essay, in demonstration of the impolicy of the system of Negro slavery and Dependent Colonization, supported by Great Britain in the West Indies, may not be superfluous.

If the facts and arguments now brought forward, warrant the conclusion, that a dissolution of the political connexion between the European States and their West Indian Colonies would be a common benefit to all; then the objection so frequently made to the abolition of slavery, "that it would cause the loss of the Colonies," has received its reply. But if, for reasons good or bad, the Colonial System must be maintained, the abolition of slavery becomes in that case so much the more necessary, as the only sure means of defending those distant possessions.

The late warfare revealed the important secret, that in the West Indies the Blacks form more effective troops than Europeans. Excellence in military drill and manœuvre, and superior personal courage, may obtain victory in a day of battle; but, in those climates, it is the soldier's capability to bear fatigue under the burning mid-day sun, and in the midnight dews, which confers ultimate success.

By the single decree of Emancipation to the Blacks, the National Convention of France raised a volunteer host of men in Guadaloupe and St. Domingo, which defeated the most powerful armaments ever sent by Britain to the West Indies. Guadaloupe was preserved to France, and so might St. Domingo, had it not been for the perfidious attempt of Buonaparte to reduce the inhabitants again to slavery. The Negroes have been made to know the value of freedom by dear-bought experience, and an enemy invading any of the countries where slavery is upheld, need only to proclaim Emancipation, to obtain the devoted co-operation of every black man. Hitherto Britain, France, and the United

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States of America, have been held in check from the use of this, their most potent means of attack upon each other's slave-territory, through mutual fear of retaliation. The suspense of the dilemma will not be of long duration, whenever war shall again occur. To one or other an advantage, in the use of this measure, will present itself; and the next encounter between those countries will be of an interest too vital, for any advantage to be foregone. Those will then be the most formidable to their antagonists, who shall have the least cause of fear for themselves.

For the measures proposed in this pamphlet, the reasons are given; they are submitted to the candid consideration of those, who have power to give effect to that which they approve. It is their part to weigh well, how far the present system of the West Indian colonies has contributed to the moral reputation, the military and naval strength, the political and commercial advantage of the British nation. The claims for indemnity, made by the slaveholders, form a separate question, which cannot arise until the emancipation of the Blacks be determined upon.

Many people, and those too men of ability, of extensive practical experience and of reflecting minds, are of opinion that no pecuniary loss would be sustained by the slaveholders from the emancipation of the Negroes; and this opinion has the corroboration of the recorded unbiassed sentiments of Hume, whose powers of mind in affairs of cool calculating state policy will be acknowledged by all men in authority. In a note to his "Essay on the Populousness of Ancient Nations," written sixty years ago, he says: "It is computed in the West Indies, that a stock of slaves grow worse five per cent. every year, unless new slaves be bought to recruit them. They are not able to keep up their number, even in those warm countries, where clothes and provisions are so easily got. I shall add, that, from the experience of our planters, slavery is as little advantageous to the master as to the slave, wherever hired servants can be procured. A man is obliged to clothe and feed his slave, and he does no more for his servant; the price of the first purchase is, therefore, so much loss to him; not to mention, that the fear of punishment will never draw so much labour from a slave, as the dread of being turned off and not getting another service, will from a free man."

If these opinions be just, and they are those of a person who was quite as capable of forming a just estimate as any one of our modern logicians or their friends the West Indian planters, the indemnity due to the slaveholders would be of no great amount. How high they may rate their privilege of inflicting blows on men who dare not strike again, they may perhaps condescend hereafter to declare.

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To the Negroes a heavy debt of atonement is due ; to them every possible remuneration and assistance ought to be given. The only justifiable causes for delay, lie in the use of such caution, and in the necessity of such preliminary improvement of the Black people, as may enable the New States to begin their career with advantage, when they shall acquire their independence : the utmost extent of that delay, is plainly limited by the period of one generation, which in that climate may be estimated at twenty-five years.

In attributing to the community at large of the British nation the crimes committed by the individuals immediately engaged in slave-dealing and in slave-holding, it may be thought that the censure is too far extended. It will be well if the full and truly satisfactory proof, of the validity of such an objection, be given by an authoritative interference of all ranks to suppress the iniquity, which they disclaim. Till that iniquity be suppressed, the censure stands confirmed.

Liverpool, April 17, 1824.

Negro Emancipation, &c. &c.

THE discussion of the policy or impolicy of the continuance of Negro Slavery, in the British West Indian Islands, has run to so great a length, that to a man of common capacity the real question seems in danger of being lost in the mass of writing.

The points to determine are, whether the present system be beneficial to the people at large of Great Britain and Ireland, and whether it confer greater happiness on the Negroes than they would enjoy by emancipation. If it do neither of these, then any pecuniary injury which so small a number of persons, as the slaveholders, might sustain, by the abolition of slavery, cannot be considered of sufficient moment to justify delay in the immediate adoption of such measures, as the safety and happiness of the Negroes and of the British people may require.

The question, respecting the amelioration of the state of the Negroes by emancipation, is at once answered, by their well known wish to emancipate themselves. That wish, the unceasing cause of alarm to those who now hold them in bondage, springs from a sense of their sufferings; of which the oppressed, at all times, know the grievance more thoroughly than the actual oppressor, or than the dispassionate bystander. The question has also fortunately received a satisfactory answer, by the experiment made in St. Domingo, where the distress of a few years' war, from 1791 to 1798, and from 1800 to 1802, sustained by the Black people against their inveterate, their natural-born enemies, if ever there were such, the French and English, has been compensated by twenty years of internal peace, prosperity, and happiness. The best informed travellers, who have visited St. Domingo, agree that the condition of that people is greatly better, as to food, raiment, and all the other comforts of life, than that of the

Negro slaves in the British West Indian Islands. If there be not so much sugar and coffee exported from St. Domingo as formerly, there is more of these good things consumed there ; and this the Black people find quite as well for them.

Without, therefore, going into a particular inquiry as to the grievances which have been and are still suffered by the Black population—the whippings, the brandings, the shootings, the hangings, the beheadings, the burnings alive, which the slaveholders have from time to time found necessary to the maintenance of their authority ; without any such particular investigation, we may safely, from the two plain facts before stated, conclude that there need be no hesitation, as far as the Blacks are concerned, in making an immediate change.

As respects the people of Great Britain, they have suffered, from the continuance of the present West Indian Colonial system, great pecuniary loss, political corruption, and, finally, extreme national weakness.

It is not pretended, even by the planters, that the British market is supplied by them with West Indian produce at so cheap a rate, as it would be if the produce of other tropical countries were admitted to a fair competition ; so far from it, that the planters demand the monopoly of the British market, as indispensable to their support.

From the superiority of Great Britain, in its geographical position, in its natural productions, and in the skill and industry of its inhabitants, furnishing commodities for exchange at the lowest rates, the prices of West Indian produce ought to be regularly lower in the British market, than in those of the rest of Europe ; whereas, the prices of West Indian produce have, on the contrary, been so much lower in the European Continental markets, than in those of Britain, on an average of years, that the people of Great Britain and Ireland have sustained a manifest annual loss of more than one million pounds sterling ; which they might have saved, if, like the other nations of Europe, they had been permitted to buy where they could find the cheapest sellers. This sacrifice has been required from Britain, in a time of peace, as an encouragement to the West Indian Colonies, along with other large sums for civil, military, naval, and ecclesiastical purposes.

For whose pecuniary benefit then is this system maintained? Not for that of the British people, nor of the 700,000 Blacks, nor of any great portion of even the 70,000 Whites resident in the Colonies; but for the benefit of a small number of individuals, styling themselves West Indian proprietors and merchants.

If the British people had in return an entire monopoly of the Colonial markets, which they have not, would the supplying of merchandise to 70,000 White persons, and to 700,000 Blacks in a state of poverty and slavery, be an equivalent for the monopoly of the markets of Great Britain and Ireland, in the articles of the greatest consumption after the absolute necessities of life? The British manufacturers and mechanics are not so far behind those of the rest of Europe, as to need an enforced monopoly for the sale of their goods. All they need and all they wish is the liberty of fair, equal, and voluntary exchange of the products of skill and industry with all men. Every deviation from that they consider as detrimental to them, however cunningly the deceit may be covered.

Neither does the acquisition, nor the preservation of naval power, depend upon the possession of foreign Colonies.

England was a great naval power, before she ever had a Colony; so were the Dutch; and the Spaniards, who possessed the most extensive, the most distant, and the richest Colonies in the world, were unable to withstand either of them on the sea.

Besides, the strength, which the number of ships in the West Indian trade may be supposed to confer on Britain, does not depend on the West Indian Islands being in the possession of the British forces, or on their owning allegiance to the British government. The employment, and, consequently, the number of those ships, depend on the people of Great Britain continuing to use the produce of the West Indies. If the British people want sugar, coffee, and rum, and are able to pay for them, in money, or in useful or ornamental commodities, the inhabitants of some of the tropical countries will take care to cultivate them for the British market. Our seamen would have an equal chance for the freight with the seamen of other nations; and the same revenue might be raised on the sale of the sugar, rum, and coffee, from wherever they were brought.

If our seamen should be unequal to a fair competition ; if, through excessive taxation, British ships cannot carry freight as cheap as those of other nations, our present navigation laws, if kept in force, would still secure the freight to our own vessels ; for it is by the cheapness of their rates of freight, or else by the operation of those navigation laws, that the West Indian trade is now carried on in British ships, and not from any patriotic preference given to them by the proprietors of the West Indian estates.

The whole trade to Columbia, Brazil, Buenos Ayres, Chili, and Peru, has been carried on for fourteen years in British shipping ; and from Britain those countries receive the whole of their European manufactured goods ; and in a great measure so do the United States of America. None of those countries are bound to Britain by any restrictive treaty. They buy our goods, because we sell them cheap ; they sell to us, because we pay for what we buy ; and by this voluntary, unconstrained interchange of commodities, our naval power is strengthened, because a demand is thereby created for our ships, and an active and healthy employment is thereby found for our seamen.

The trade to the West Indies is at present confined to a few commercial houses, by whom the great mass of the population there is held in a state of abject wretchedness and slavery ; the ships made use of are, from the restricted nature of the trade, few in number, of large tonnage, and manned by a small number of seamen.

But were the Blacks set free, and the government of the islands in the hands of the inhabitants, there would be a new stimulus to the export of British manufactured goods, from the increased expenditure of a people advancing in civilization and labouring for their own comfort, as has been proved in the instance of St. Domingo ; the imports from the United States and Great Britain alone into that republic, in the year 1823, having been equal nearly in value to the total amount of the imports from all countries into St. Domingo, for any year prior to the expulsion of the French planters.

An increase to our shipping would also follow, from the open competition of the merchants of small capital, who would, as in all other free trades, employ a number of small vessels, manned by a numerous body of seamen.

Nor is this merely supposition, for by the free trade of a very few years to South America, greater benefit has been already conferred on Britain, than was ever derived to Spain and Portugal from the exclusive possession of the same countries as Colonies.

There might, perhaps, be advantage in the possession of one or two naval stations in the West Indies, sufficient to justify the expence necessary for their occupation. But experience has proved, that a system of extended colonization, with its attendant establishments, civil, military, and naval ; that the perpetual maintenance, in an unhealthy climate, of numerous garrisons in the time of peace, to enforce submission on the part of the inhabitants, with the addition of fleets and armies in the time of war, has been the cause of loss and not of gain to every nation that has yet tried it.

The Colonies of Spain and Portugal, although furnishing silver and gold in unparalleled abundance, were the immediate cause of the ruin of those two kingdoms ; both of them warlike and powerful nations, until they acquired extensive colonies ; after that, weak, sunk in debt, and incapable of self-defence.

The Dutch were also a powerful and energetic people, increasing in strength for seventy years, from 1560 to 1630, amidst all the horrors of daily internal warfare ; and even till 1704, in spite of all the attacks of Spain, and afterwards of France. But after they had formed Colonial establishments in the West Indies, South America, and the East Indies, those establishments, as they grew up, with their inseparable concomitant, monopoly, gradually wasted the strength and sapped the happiness of the mother country. Those monopolies constituted a privileged class, who lent their aid to the Stadholders in all their attacks on the liberties of the people, and in return expected and received their reward, in the confiscation of the fruits of that people's industry ; and what all the armies of Philip II. and of Louis XIV. attempted in vain, the silent operation of the Colonial system quietly accomplished.

Similar effects may be traced in the events of British history, although the great natural resources of the country have made these effects more slow in their developement.

In the war of the succession to the crown of Spain,

which commenced in 1702, the British army, under the victorious Marlborough, controlled the destinies of Europe; when the adoption of a petty Colonial system by the Tory Ministry, and the outfit of an expedition to Canada under General Hill, brother of Lady Masham the favourite of the Queen, by depriving the armies in Flanders and Spain of the needful reinforcements, paralyzed their exertions, and finally led to a surrender of Spain to the family of Bourbon. While France by defeat gained possession of Spain, the whole fruit to Britain of the victories of Blenheim, Ramillies, and Malplaquet, was the concession by France of the West Indian Island of St. Christopher, and permission by what was called the "*Assiento Contract*," to carry annually a certain number of Negro slaves to the Spanish Main.

In 1739, that very "*Assiento Contract*" was the cause of war; and the desire to acquire new Colonial territory led to a misdirection of the strength of the country, in the fatal expedition to Cartagena, where an army perished which might have secured victory at Fontenoy. Defeat abroad was followed by rebellion at home; and the nation, which in its greed of heart had contemplated the conquest of South America, could not muster an army of native troops competent to the defence of London, against 8,000 half-armed, undisciplined men; but owed its preservation to the assistance of some Hessian regiments. Such a war was of necessity closed by a corresponding ignominious peace.

Another war came on in 1755, and Britain was found, for real warlike purposes in Europe, weaker than ever; her rank there was less than that of the Dutch in 1704. A detachment of the French force compelled the Allied army under the Duke of Cumberland to capitulate at Closterseven; and the sending of a few regiments, less in number than an Hanoverian contingent, with some subsidy money, was the total sum of the subsequent exertions of the British in Europe. Their ambition reached no higher than to claim a small portion of the honour gained at Minden by Prince Ferdinand and his honest Germans. The strength of Britain was in the meantime wasted, to acquire the burden of a perpetual establishment of garrisons over a discontented people in Canada, and the power to tyrannize over a few more of the wretched Blacks in the unhealthy

West Indian islands. Fortunately, the greatest number of the conquered islands were restored to France, to make her too suffer in the same way.

In a few years after, as if to hasten the catastrophe, a quarrel was begun with the Colonies in North America ; and so fond was the British government, and not less so the British people, of the garrison and tyrannising system, that they were actually mad enough to try its application on the White Colonists themselves. But here the plan failed, and the attempt ended in the acknowledgement of the Independence of the United States.

Bitter reproaches of ingratitude were cast, during the contest, by the British against the Americans ; that they had accepted favours, and would make no return. But the idea never seems to have entered the dull heads of the British people, that if, while the Virginian planters were rebellious, the proprietors of West Indian estates were loyal, it was because the latter had the best of the bargain, in the gratuitous protection given to them against their slaves, and in the monopoly enjoyed by them of the British market. For the southern division of the United States is not so unhealthy as to prevent the increase of a White population, adequate to the coercion of the Blacks ; and, in this respect, therefore, the Virginians were independent of Britain. In none of the British West Indian islands, on the contrary, has the race of White men been able to keep up its own numbers without continued large reinforcements from the mother country ; and, although a mixed breed has arisen, yet the avarice of the British men has almost universally prevailed on them to leave their mulatto children in the condition of slaves, when born of an enslaved mother ; so that the free part of the population has always stood in need of British garrisons to maintain its authority.

A similar Colonial system, and similar distant naval and military expeditions brought France, about the same time, to the brink of ruin. She was rescued from it by the tremendous convulsion of the Revolution, by the burning of every plantation in St. Domingo, and by the extermination from thence of all the French inhabitants.—The Republic of France started up instantaneously, with all the vigour of youth, as if *Etna* had been removed from the breast of the fabled giant.

But as if the Colonial malady were at one period or another incidental to every government, Buonaparte, soon after his accession to power, became, through the intrigues and representations of the old proprietors of West Indian estates, subject to its influence. In 1801 he sent an expedition of 40,000 veteran troops under his brother-in-law, General Leclerc, to St. Domingo. In two years 30,000 of them were cut off by the yellow fever, and a few by the enemy ; the rest owed their safety to the interference of the British naval commander.

Another attempt at a naval expedition was made by Buonaparte in 1805. His good fortune saved him. By the loss of the sea-fight off Trafalgar, his theatre of action was confined to Europe, which he totally overran and conquered ; and if his power ultimately was destroyed, the cause was his obstinate pursuit of distant dominion.

And what was Britain doing all this while ?

When, by a well-timed exertion of her strength, she might, in conjunction with her allies, during the temporary confusion of France in 1793 and 1794, have made what end she thought proper of the French and of their revolution, she was led astray, by the Colonial mania, to send expedition after expedition, naval and military, thousands of men upon thousands of men, at an enormous expence, to perish by disease in the West Indies. In twenty-eight months, from November, 1793, to March, 1796, no less than 54,212 men of the British troops, a greater number than all the White residents of the islands then belonging to Britain, were sent to the West Indies. Nearly all of them perished there.

Whilst France conquered Belgium, Holland, Italy, Prussia, Austria, Spain, and Poland, Britain conquered St. Lucia, Martinique, Tobago, Guadaloupe, and the Mauritius,—of which the entire White population might amount to 50,000 persons ; and after the year 1799, it was not until the year 1808, when there were no more Colonies to be taken, that Britain could summon courage to send a single regiment on one week's European service.

Even now, when the whole nation of Spain has called on the British for assistance, when every consideration of interest and every generous sentiment urged compliance with that call, they have been obliged to confess a total de-

falcation of strength, brought on by the expence of former wars, which owed their origin to the Colonial system.

Such has been the train of events, from a persistance in the fatal system of West Indian colonization ; a system founded in crime, and productive of merited ruin.

If Negro slavery be considered as the act of the British people, and not of their government only, then has retributive justice been made signally manifest :

“For, in these cases,

We still have judgement here ; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor : thus even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips.”

The original device, to unfeeling and profligate minds, had its allurements. To take advantage of their superior skill in navigation and warfare, by seizing on defenceless men and compelling them to incessant labour, year after year, generation after generation, seemed to the greedy British people a means of acquiring wealth, as easy and speedy as highway robbery and midnight murder. Accordingly it was with alacrity begun, and with relentless diligence put in practice. No means were neglected ; the lash, the gibbet, the sword, and fire, were employed to enforce the labour of the weak, and the obedience of the refractory.

For the reward of these horrible atrocities, their sordid and callous hearts promised them a general diffusion of wealth, and relaxation from labour.

What has been the event ?

Those West Indian Islands have been the constant object, or the never failing pretext for war, and for oppressive taxation. The cunning planters have taken care to appropriate to themselves whatever could be gained. They have grown in wealth, while the people of England and Ireland have sunk in poverty ; till the condition of West Indian slaves has come to be thrown in the teeth of the British people, as an object of desire.

Slaveholder after slaveholder has been placed in the House of Lords ; borough after borough has fallen into their hands ; with its own money have they bought the stupid people, and having bought, they are ready to resell that people for fresh grants of its own money.

Every consideration, therefore, of the subject leads to one conclusion : the claims of the Negroes, the interests of the British people, justice and good policy, all demand an immediate abandonment of this long course of error and of crime.

Happily the change is of easy attainment. All that is necessary at this time, is the establishment of justice by the admission of the Black people to give evidence in civil and criminal causes ; the absolute interdiction of all corporal punishment, in any other way than according to the law and usages of England ; and for the proprietors of the West Indian plantations to pay the Negroes daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly wages, as may be found most convenient by mutual agreement, instead of taking upon themselves the trouble to provide that yearly supply of food and clothing which the Negroes, as slaves, receive from them.

Other requisite alterations will naturally present themselves, and can be gradually adopted.

By the measures now proposed, the chief source of the oppression exercised by the White people, and the main cause of discontent on the part of the Negroes, will at once be done away with ; the necessity will cease for the presence of hired troops ; and the inhabitants of the West Indian Islands will, in a short time, become fit to assume the management of their own internal and external affairs : Great Britain will be relieved from a heavy burden ; and exchange the deep, the deserved hatred of the injured Negroes, and the hypocritical professions of loyalty, the insatiable rapacity, the domineering insolence, of the present race of West Indian proprietors, for the grateful and the profitable friendship of the enfranchised and happy WEST INDIAN PEOPLE.

Liverpool, March 13, 1824.